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The Relationship of Religion to Moral Education in the Public Schools(1)

Prepared By

Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes

Introduction

Most programs of moral education in the public schools, and virtually all character education programs, ignore religion. Of course, the same might be said of the *entire* public school curriculum - apart from history courses and historical literature read in English courses. The conventional wisdom of educators appears to be that students can learn everything they need to learn about whatever they study (other than history) without learning anything about religion. In our deeply religious culture this has not gone unnoticed. Indeed, many religious conservatives are outraged by it; they take the absence of religion from textbooks and the curriculum to imply hostility to religion. This has fueled the culture wars that now divide many communities, undermining the educational mission of our schools.

Much of the culture-war debate about religion in public education has been framed in terms of the combat between two polarized groups: those religious conservatives who would restore prayer to school activities, add creationism to the curriculum, and drop sex education from it; and those liberals who would keep prayer out of schools, keep religion out of the curriculum, and keep sex education in it. Battles in this culture war are fought regularly in courtrooms, direct-mail campaigns, local school board elections, and national politics. (Small wonder, then, that educators wish to avoid religion.)

We intend in this paper to provide a more nuanced account of what is at issue. In the first two sections of our paper, we spell out the civic and educational principles that should govern the role of religion in the public schools - and that define the common ground on which we might stand together in resolving our differences. Indeed, although our differences are deep, we believe that religion need not be nearly so controversial as it now appears to be. In section three, we sketch a general theory of moral education that emphasizes character education but goes beyond it to a conception of *liberal education as moral education* that allows us to address controversial and foundational moral questions. Then, in section four, we bring the first three sections of the paper together in discussing what we take to be the proper, indeed, the essential role of religion in both

character education and in moral education more generally, taking sex education and economics education as case studies. We end with a set of recommendations for reforming education in a way that would take religion and moral education seriously.

1. The Civic Framework

Religion must be taken seriously in the public school curriculum, including in moral education, for two fundamental reasons - or families of reasons.

First, there are civic reasons. The American experiment in liberty is built on the conviction that it is possible to find common ground in spite of deep religious differences. It is rooted in the civic agreement we share as citizens, in our principled commitment to respect one another. Properly understood, this means that we not exclude religious voices from the public square or from public education, but that we take one another seriously. For much of our history, Protestantism enjoyed a favored status in the ceremony, rhetoric, and often in the curriculum and textbooks of public schools. That was unjust; it meant that education didn't take others of different (or no) religious convictions seriously. In the 20th century the curriculum has often excluded religion. In *public schools* this is unjust; it means that we don't take religious people seriously. All sides need to recognize that we cannot resolve the current battles by promoting a particular religion or by excluding all religion from the curriculum.

The civic framework for the role of religion in public schools is provided by the religious liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. For more than 50 years, ever since it first applied the First Amendment to the states, the Supreme Court has held that government, and therefore public schools, must be *neutral* in matters of religion. It is not proper for public schools to take sides on religiously contested questions. We argue that if schools are to be truly neutral they must be truly fair - and this means including in the curriculum religious as well as secular ways of making sense of the world when we disagree. Government may no more inhibit religion than promote it.

Second, as we shall see shortly, there are *educational* reasons for taking religion seriously across the curriculum. A good *liberal* education should expose students to the major ways humanity has developed for making sense of the world - and some of those ways of understanding the world are religious. An exclusively secular education is an illiberal education.

The Civil Public School

For both civic and educational reasons, then, public-school educators must think carefully about the treatment of religion in moral education. Of course, this will not be easy given the confusion and controversy surrounding the role of religion in public schools that has been with us since the founding of public education. The challenge is to move beyond both the "sacred public school" where one religion is preferred in school practices and policies and the "naked public school"

where religion is kept out in the name of a strict separation of church and state. Both models are unjust and, we believe, unconstitutional.

We propose a third model, one that is consistent with First Amendment principles and broadly supported by many education and religious groups: the *civil public school* where people of all faiths and none are treated with fairness and respect.

A Shared Vision

The starting point for this third model is the shared vision of religious liberty that undergirds a truly civil public school. Four years ago, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center decided that the time had come for a new dialogue between public school educators and some of their severest critics, especially among conservative Christians. Much was at stake on all sides. Everyone at the table was painfully aware that culture war battles in public schools tear apart the fabric of our society and greatly threaten efforts to reform schools.

The first meeting in April, 1994 opened with a list of disputes ranging from religious holidays and prayer to school reform and sex education. Hearing the litany of conflicts, a participant remarked that if we don't find ways to address our differences concerning religion and values in schools, then public education doesn't have much of a future. Dr. Ernest Boyer, representing the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, suddenly hit the table saying "I wouldn't put it that way." The group looked surprised, well aware of Dr. Boyer's strong advocacy of public education. "No," he said emphatically, "if we don't do better in addressing these conflicts, it's not just public schools, but *our nation* that doesn't have much of a future."

We kept Dr. Boyer's warning before us as we struggled to craft an agreement that would help local schools and communities move from battleground to common ground. One year later, in the spring of 1995, twenty-one educational and religious groups issued a Statement of Principles entitled *Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy*. For the first time in our history, organizations representing a broad spectrum of religious and political views - from right to left - articulated a shared vision of religious liberty in the public schools. The core of the agreement is captured in Principle IV which states:

Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education.(2)

This articulation of First Amendment principles is as remarkable for who says it

as for what it says. The National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, and the American Association of School Administrators joined with the Christian Legal Society, the American Center for Law and Justice, and Citizens for Excellence in Education. The Anti-Defamation League and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations are on the list, and so is the Council on Islamic Education and the Christian Educators Association International. Perhaps most remarkably, the Christian Coalition and People for the American Way are sponsors.

Neutrality and Fairness

The Statement of Principles signals that there is much consensus regarding the relationship of religion to government and to public schools under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion..."). We suggest that at the heart of this consensus is the idea that the public schools should be *neutral* in matters of religion.

Ever since its landmark ruling in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), the Supreme Court has taken *neutrality* as its touchstone in adjudicating Establishment Clause cases.⁽³⁾ As government institutions, public schools must be religiously neutral - in two senses: they must be neutral *among religions* (they can't privilege one religion over another); *and* they must be neutral *between religion and nonreligion* (they can't privilege religion generally over nonreligion).

What is not often appreciated is the fact that neutrality is a two-edged sword. Just as public schools can't promote religion, neither can they inhibit or denigrate religion. The courts have also been clear about *this* - but, of course, here is where the conceptual waters become muddy. What counts as inhibiting or denigrating religion?

We argue that it is anything but neutral to ignore religion. Neutrality cannot mean hostility or even silence. It is, of course, true that public schools cannot be in the business of religious indoctrination; faith formation is properly the province of the family and religious institutions. But at the same time, schools have an obligation to make sure that religion is taken seriously. Neutrality requires *fairness* to religion.

Quite apart from the Court's interpretation of the Establishment Clause, we believe that justice requires that the curriculum of public schools be neutral in a pluralistic democracy. When the public disagrees deeply, public schools should not promote, much less institutionalize, one view and remain silent about others. Unlike private schools, *public schools* must take *the public* seriously. For example, because we disagree deeply about which political party has the better policies, it would violate our sense of justice for public schools to take sides, teaching only the policies and values of one party, leaving the other out of the discussion. We also disagree deeply, often on religious grounds, about how to make sense of our lives and the world; hence, public schools should not promote,

much less institutionalize, any particular way of making sense of the world *be it religious or secular*. If public schools are to be built on common civic ground, they must be neutral when we disagree; they must take everyone seriously.

Free Exercise of Religion

Before discussing more fully the implications of neutrality and the Establishment Clause for public schools, we should take note of the strong agreement that now coalesces around the meaning of the Free Exercise Clause ("Congress shall make no law...prohibiting the free exercise [of religion]...") in a public school setting. *Religion in the Public Schools: A Joint Statement of Current Law*, also published in 1995, expresses the consensus of thirty-five religious and civil liberties groups on the religious liberty rights of public school students. That same year, President Clinton drew on the Joint Statement when he issued a directive through the U. S. Department of Education to all public school superintendents outlining the constitutional and educational role of religion in the public schools. The National PTA and the First Amendment Center built on both documents to produce *A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*, more than 250,000 of which have been distributed by schools and communities at this writing.(4)

These consensus statements signal that in public schools - in what we envision as civil public schools - we can now agree on what it means "to protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none." We can agree that students have the right to pray in a public school alone or in groups, as long as the activity does not disrupt the school or infringe on the rights of others. These activities must be truly voluntary and student-initiated. For example, students are permitted to gather around the flagpole for prayer before school begins, as long as the event is not sponsored by the school and other students are not pressured to attend. Students also have the right to share their faith with others and to read their scriptures.

When it is relevant to the discussion or meets the academic requirements, students have the right to express personal religious views in class or as part of a written assignment or art activity. They may not, of course, force their classmates to participate in a religious exercise.

Most legal experts agree that students have the right to distribute religious literature in public schools subject to reasonable restrictions imposed by school officials regarding time, place, and manner. This means that the school may specify when and where the distribution may occur. But the restrictions should be reasonable, and must be applied evenly to all non-school student literature.

In secondary schools, the 1984 Equal Access Act ensures that students may form religious clubs if the school allows other extracurricular clubs. The Act is intended to protect *student-initiated* and *student-led* meetings. Outsiders may not "direct, conduct, control, or regularly attend" student clubs, and faculty sponsors may be present at religious meeting in a non-participatory capacity only. Student religious clubs must be given the same access to school facilities and media as

other extracurricular clubs.

In short, students are not required to leave their religion at the schoolhouse door. Only when behavior is coercive or disruptive should it be prohibited.

Despite the broad agreement on all of these rights, some areas of disagreement remain - especially concerning student prayers at graduation or other school events. At present, there is no clear legal answer to this conflict because lower courts are divided about the constitutionality of student-initiated, student-led prayers at graduation exercises. Until the Supreme Court resolves the matter, school districts in various parts of the country will follow different rules.

The good news, however, is how much consensus there is on students' religious liberty rights in a public school. As President Clinton said in his speech announcing the guidelines, public schools need not be "religion-free zones."

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

A civil public school is also one that recognizes, in the words of the *Statement of Principles*, that parents have "the primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children, including education." This means that parents should be informed and involved when the school addresses religion and religious liberty.

Of special interest to parents, especially religious parents, are school policies concerning accommodation of student religious needs and requirements. Most school officials will try to accommodate requests of parents for excusal of their child from classroom discussions or activities for religious reasons if the request is focused on a specific discussion, assignment or activity. To be sure, the school has a important interest in teaching Sally to read. But giving Sally an alternate assignment for one book or a few stories is a good way to accomplish the school's educational goal while still protecting Sally's religious liberty.(5)

This does not mean that school officials can or should accommodate all opt-out requests, especially when such requests are extensive. For example, schools could not accommodate parents who want their child to be excused from the world history class every time religion is mentioned, because religion frequently comes up (or ought to) in the study of world civilizations. Courts have recognized that public schools do not have to accommodate every request to opt out of portions of the curriculum.(6) Of course, it isn't always clear just where educators should draw the line. But when parents limit their request to particular lessons or activities, schools should try to provide an alternative for the student.

A number of schools have added another dimension to their excusal policies - one that is popular with many parents: *opt-in*. This involves requiring parental notification and permission for students to be involved in potentially controversial lessons or activities. If, for example, a high school teacher decides to show an R-rated movie such as *Schindler's List* as part of the study of the Holocaust, parents would have to sign a permission slip for their child to see the film. Some school

districts also use opt-in policies for participation in extracurricular student clubs. In this way parents know what is happening in the school and are given the opportunity to keep their children out of activities they may find objectionable.

The effort to accommodate religious claims in public schools can be time-consuming and sometimes frustrating for educators, especially as our nation's religious diversity continues to expand. But it is well worth the trouble. By making every effort to accommodate, school officials not only fulfill their obligations under the First Amendment, they also create trust between the school and parents - trust that is essential for building agreement on how to address moral issues in the curriculum.

Study of Religion

A civil public school that upholds religious liberty rights of parents and students also ensures that the curriculum treats religion fairly and fully. We argue that if public schools "may not inculcate nor inhibit" religion, if they are to remain neutral concerning religion, then the curriculum must include religious as well as secular ways of understanding the world. Excluding religion, or barely mentioning it, is hardly neutral or fair. For many parents, the failure to take religion seriously in the curriculum is strong evidence that public education takes sides against religion.

Under Supreme Court rulings, public schools clearly have permission to require that students learn about religion (leaving it to educators to decide where and how this should be done). The Court has not said when or if ignoring religion might violate government neutrality concerning religion. But the principles of neutrality articulated by the Court lend support to our contention that a neutral and fair curriculum must include study of religion.

In a series of decisions in the 1960s striking down state-sponsored religious exercises in public schools, the Court reaffirmed that "no establishment" prohibits the government not only from preferring one religion over another, but also from preferring religion over non-religion.⁽⁷⁾ Writing for the majority in *Abington v. Schempp*, Justice Tom Clark argued that required religious exercises in public schools are a "breach of neutrality" barred by the First Amendment. He was careful, however, to make clear that government neutrality cannot result in hostility to religion. That is, government cannot prefer nonreligion over religion either. As Justice Clark wrote, the government may not establish a "religion of secularism" by opposing or showing hostility to religion. Neither should neutrality be taken to mean that the curriculum must exclude religion. On the contrary, study of religion is important. In the frequently-quoted words of the Court's *Schempp* decision:

[I]t might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic

qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.

Clearly, including the academic study of religion does not violate the Establishment clause. But is the school *required* to teach about religion in order to maintain neutrality? Justice Goldberg's concurring opinion in *Schempp* comes close to suggesting that the answer may be yes:

It is said, and I agree, that the attitude of government toward religion must be one of neutrality. But untutored devotion to the concept of neutrality can lead to invocation or approval of results which partake not simply of that noninterference and noninvolvement with the religious which the Constitution commands, but of a brooding and pervasive devotion to the secular and a passive, or even active, hostility to the religious. Such results are not only not compelled by the Constitution, but, it seems to me, are prohibited by it.

Neither government nor this Court can or should ignore the significance of the fact that a vast portion of our people believe in and worship God and that many of our legal, political and personal values derive historically from religious teachings. Government must inevitably take cognizance of the existence of religion and, indeed, under certain circumstances the First Amendment may require that it do so. And it seems clear to me from the opinions in the present and past cases that the Court would recognize the propriety of providing military chaplains and of the teaching about religion, as distinguished from the teaching of religion, in the public schools.

A public school curriculum that teaches secular ways of seeing the world while barely mentioning religious perspectives strikes us as a good example of the "passive hostility" Justice Goldberg says is prohibited by the First Amendment. The curriculum may well be one of those places where the government is required to "take cognizance of the existence of religion."

If the Court has not explicitly required that religion be included in the curriculum, we would argue that it ought to do so. Under the Court's own test for neutrality in *Schempp*, as well as in subsequent decisions, public schools may do nothing that has a primary effect of either advancing or inhibiting religion. We are convinced that the current curriculum does inhibit religion by marginalizing religion in our intellectual, moral, and cultural life, implicitly conveying the sense that religion is irrelevant in the search for truth in the various domains of the curriculum. On both civic and educational grounds a fair and neutral curriculum would include considerable study of religion.

The Role of the Teacher

Fairness and neutrality concerning religion in the curriculum are possible only when teachers have a clear understanding of their role under the First Amendment. Teachers in public schools are employees of the government (or, better, they are there to act on behalf of all citizens). In that capacity, they are subject to the Establishment clause and thus required to be neutral concerning religion while carrying out their duties as teacher. This does not mean, of course, that teachers should be neutral about values. Teachers can and should model and teach the civic values and virtues of citizenship, as well as the core moral values and character traits widely agreed to in the community.

The neutrality required of teachers by the First Amendment is intended to prevent the government from imposing religious or anti-religious views on students. True, in settings beyond the school, courts have let stand some traditional acknowledgments of religion in government settings (the Supreme Court itself opens with prayer). But when a captive audience of "impressionable young minds" is involved, the courts are stricter about practices that suggest state endorsement of religion.(8)

This constitutional requirement of neutrality limits in some respects the academic freedom of the public school teacher. Teachers have the freedom, indeed the obligation, to expose students to the marketplace of ideas. They may not, however, either inculcate or denigrate religion. When teaching *about* religion, the teacher, like the curriculum, does not take sides concerning religion.

Does this mean a teacher may never mention personal religious views? What should happen when, for example, students ask the teacher to reveal his or her religion? We think that teachers should be free to answer the question, but must consider the age of the students before doing so. Middle and high school students may be able to distinguish between a personal view and the official position of the school; very young children may not. In any case, the teacher may answer with a brief statement of personal belief but may not turn the question into an opportunity to proselytize for or against religion.

Teachers, like students, bring their faith through the schoolhouse door each morning. In our view, the Establishment clause doesn't prohibit teachers from reading a religious book during non-instructional time, saying a quiet grace before meals, or wearing religious jewelry. If a group of teachers wishes to meet for prayer or scriptural study during the school day, we see no constitutional reason why they should not be allowed to do so as long as the activity is outside the presence of students and doesn't interfere with the rights of other teachers.

Constitutional problems arise when the teacher decides to use the classroom to either promote or denigrate religion. Parents in a North Carolina school district recently complained that their daughter's social studies teacher took every opportunity to make negative and sarcastic remarks about evangelical Christianity. On the other end of the spectrum, a Virginia teacher had to appear before the school board to answer complaints that she was using the curriculum, especially in December, to encourage students to accept Christ. In both instances,

the behavior of the teacher was unconstitutional and unprofessional.

Although teachers may sometimes be confused about where to draw the line, most understand their obligation to model the First Amendment in the public school. A civil public school is a place where teachers are clear about how to apply religious liberty principles, and are prepared to address religious issues in the classroom.

Toward a Common Vision for the Common Good

We are convinced that creating a civil public school is the most effective way to move schools beyond the culture wars -- to move from battleground to common ground. We have seen it happen in communities throughout the country. But even if there were no culture war, a civil public school is at the heart of the civic and educational mission of public education. Moreover, when public education takes religion and religious liberty seriously, it builds the trust and credibility necessary for implementing effective moral education throughout the school culture.

Unfortunately, this vision is a tough sell in many school districts. Either they are currently violating the First Amendment by promoting religion and don't want to take the political risk of calling for change. Or they have managed largely to ignore religion and see no reason to deal with it. Both attitudes fall into the "let sleeping dogs lie" theory of school administration. Often it takes a crisis (usually a lawsuit) to move the district to act.

The failure of schools to be pro-active concerning religious liberty and religion is not surprising. Administrators and school board members need only look at colleagues in other places who have been caught in the crossfire of charge and counter-charge about such issues as prayer, equal access, the "December dilemma," or textbook selection. Lawsuits, re-call elections, dismissed superintendents, are what they see. Why stir all of this up? Mostly for two reasons:

First, applying religious liberty principles fully and fairly in public schools is not only the right thing to do, it is, as Dr. Boyer warned, urgently necessary if we are going to live with our deepest differences in the 21st century. As the religious diversity of the United States continues to expand, it will be increasingly important that public schools be places where religious liberty works, and where we learn as much as possible about one another.

Second, the survival of public education may be at stake. The exodus from public schools is fueled in large measure by dissatisfaction with how schools address issues concerning religion and values. If schools act now, this can be reversed. With the new consensus on religious liberty in schools and religion in the curriculum, it is now possible to find common ground and to re-build trust where it has been lost.

2. The Educational Framework

Just as there are civic and constitutional reasons for including religion in the curriculum, so there are educational reasons. And, just as those civic and constitutional reasons provide a framework for dealing with religion, so there is an educational framework that shapes how educators should deal with religion in the curriculum and in the classroom. Happily, these frameworks complement each other, for each is grounded in respect and the obligation *to be fair*.

The New Consensus

Our educational framework is grounded in what we have called the *New Consensus*.⁽⁹⁾ There is now widespread agreement among the leaders of religious and educational organizations about the role of religion in the curriculum. For example, in 1988, seventeen major religious and educational organizations (including the American Jewish Congress and the Islamic Society of North America, the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Council of Churches, the American Association of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association, the AFT, NEA, and the ASCD among them) endorsed a document entitled: *Religion and the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers*, that describes the importance of religion in the public school curriculum in this way:

Because religion plays significant roles in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices, and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art, and contemporary life unintelligible.⁽¹⁰⁾

From this and other statements of the New Consensus a number of conclusions follow. First, because of the powerful influence of religion on our history and culture it is essential--and not optional--to include religion in the curriculum. Second, the influence of religion is not limited to history; students must understand the relevance of religion to contemporary life. Third, religion is relevant to virtually all subjects of the curriculum. Finally, it is important to understand a variety of religions, not just our own.

We suggest that we think about the relevance of religion to the curriculum in three ways.

Education and the Search for Meaning

First, a good education should provide students with *perspective*. It should give them some sense of what is truly important, some understanding of the sources of meaning in life.

Of course we disagree about what is important and what makes life meaningful, so let us put it this way. There are questions that any reasonably thoughtful

person must ask: What is love-and what is the difference between sex and love? What does justice require of me and of my country? When am I obligated to sacrifice my own good for that of someone else? What are the deepest sources of joy in life? How did the world begin? What sense can we make of suffering and of death? Is there progress in human affairs-and if so why? Is there a God? And how do I know any of this?

There are, of course, both secular and religious ways of asking, reflecting on, and answering these unavoidable *existential* questions. Whether or not we think the various answers that religious traditions have given to these existential questions are reasonable, we must acknowledge the profundity of the attempts, their powerful influence on people's thinking and lives, and the universality of the concerns they address. In fact, it is extraordinary to think that we can claim to educate students while ignoring religious approaches to the deepest questions of human existence.

Religion and History

Of course we don't ignore religion completely. There is widespread agreement that students must learn about religion in their study of history--and for good reason. Until the last several hundred years in the West, the dominant answers to these inescapable existential questions were religious. Indeed, for most of history the sacred and the secular were pervasively entwined and religion pervaded all of life: from birth to death the sustaining rituals of life were religious; people's understanding of politics, war, economics, justice, literature, art, philosophy, science, psychology, history, morality, and their hopes for a life to come were all religiously shaped and informed. If students are to understand history they must understand religion. This is not controversial.

History is not a matter of merely "academic" importance, however. The study of history locates us in "communities of memory" (to use Robert Bellah's fine phrase) that give definition to our identities. We are not simply individuals, ahistorical social atoms; we are born into cultures defined by languages and institutions, ideas and ideals, and we only know who we are when we have some sense of our inheritance. Whether or not we are religious, the religious past of our culture has played a powerful role in shaping us and to be ignorant of this past is a little being an amnesiac, choosing one's future without any sense of who one has been. History roots us in the past; it provides cultural ballast.

The study of history also provides us with critical distance on the present; it liberates students from parochial "present-mindedness." Indeed, by revealing the religious roots of our ideals and institutions history gives students some sense of just how secular our civilization has become.

Religion and Liberal Education

Of course religion continues to possess a good deal of vitality in our culture. Indeed, because many intellectuals continue to give religious answers to the

profound existential questions of life there is a vast contemporary religious literature that explores the implications of religion for virtually every subject in the curriculum: politics and economics, nature and psychology, literature and the arts, sexuality and morality. This literature rarely finds its way into the curriculum, however; instead, we teach students to think about virtually all aspects of their lives and the world in secular categories--*uncritically*, as it were. And so we have our third reason for taking religion seriously: the study of religion enables students to think critically about what they learn in their secular studies. To see the significance of this a little background may prove helpful.

Worldviews. The astronomer Arthur Eddington once told a parable about a fisherman who used a net with a three-inch mesh. After a lifetime of fishing he (falsely) concluded there were no fish shorter than three inches. Eddington's moral is that just as one's fishing net determines what one catches, so it is with conceptual nets: what we find in the ocean of reality depends on the conceptual net we bring to our investigation.

For example, the modern scientific conceptual net--or scientific method--allows scientists to catch only replicable events; the results of any experiment that cannot be replicated are not allowed to stand. This means that miracles, which are by definition singular events, can't be caught; scientists cannot ask God to replicate the miracle for the sake of a controlled experiment. Or, to take another example, scientific method requires that evidence for knowledge-claims be grounded in sense experience--the kinds of experience that instruments can measure. But this rules out religious experience as a source of knowledge about the world.

Theologians, by contrast, have constructed different kinds of conceptual nets for catching dimensions of reality that, they claim, escape scientific nets. Within all religious traditions moral and religious experiences are taken to provide knowledge of a transcendent dimension of reality.⁽¹¹⁾ The Western religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - have made sense of the world not in terms of universal causal laws, but narratives: events become intelligible not because they are lawlike, but because they fit in the plot of a story (as miracles might).

In fact, how reasonable or "objective" a claim is--indeed, whether it makes sense at all--depends on the conceptual nets we bring to the discussion. There is more to a worldview than the conceptual nets (or methodology) used by scientists or theologians or philosophers; still, we might say that what is issue is worldviews.

For most of history, the governing worldviews of civilization have been religious, but over the course of the last several centuries in the West, modern science has come to provide the dominant worldview of our civilization and, as a result, shape our educational system. In the process, what counts as reasonable (and what counts as a matter of faith) has changed.

Subjects and Disciplines. The usual rhetoric notwithstanding, public schools don't teach subjects. If students were taught subjects they might learn something about how different conceptual nets - or worldviews - might be used for making sense

of those subjects. But they learn about history only as modern secular historians understand it; they learn about nature only as secular scientists understand it; they learn about economics only as secular social scientists understand it. That is, they are taught to think about the world in terms of intellectual disciplines defined by secular conceptual nets.

As a result, public education nurtures a secular mentality. Indeed, when educators provide students with secular conceptual nets only, when religion is ignored (except in a "safely" historical context) students learn, in effect, that secular nets are adequate for catching all of reality. The conventional wisdom of modern education is that students can learn everything they need to know about every "subject" they study yet know nothing about religious ways of making sense of it. As a result, religion has been intellectually marginalized, rendered irrelevant. No doubt most educators don't intend to do this, yet this is the result.

Education and Indoctrination. A distinction is often drawn between education on the one hand, and socialization, training, and indoctrination on the other. Soldiers are trained to march and are socialized to follow the orders of their officers. Children are toilet-trained (rather than educated in toiletry) and, with some luck, they are socialized to obey their parents. In each of these cases, learning is more a matter of drill, discipline, and habit than of critical thinking. In matters of morality, politics, and religion we often use the word "indoctrination" rather than "training" or "socialization." We indoctrinate children (or adults) when we teach (or socialize) them to accept doctrines, or a point of view, uncritically. We educate them, by contrast, when we provide them with a measure of critical distance on their subjects, enabling them to think in an informed and reflective ways about alternatives.

Public schools inevitably and properly train and socialize children: learning the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, for example, is largely a matter of training and drill; learning to be honest and on time is largely a matter of socialization. With older children, however, the goal should be largely educational. We don't want to socialize or indoctrinate them into accepting positions on contested issues--issues about which we disagree. In America, for example, we are deeply divided between the Republican and Democratic parties. A public school has no business indoctrinating students into accepting the policies of either political party for both civic and educational reasons. Students can only think and act reasonably when they know something about the alternatives; indeed, we usually believe that the truth is most likely to be found when we hear both sides of the story, not one side only.

As students mature and proceed through the grades, the extent to which they are trained and socialized should diminish, while their education, properly conceived, should take root and grow. Education is the initiation of students into a discussion in which they are taught to understand, take seriously, and think critically about the contending voices in our world. This is often called liberal education - though "liberal education" is redundant, just as "liberal training" is an oxymoron.

When we teach students secular ways of thinking about all "subjects" in the curriculum, when we uncritically teach them the value of secular nets only, we are in real danger of indoctrinating them. It is not enough to teach the truth as one party in the disagreement understands it; if only that view is taught students will not have the critical distance on it to make educated judgments about it. It is one thing to believe (what one takes to be) the truth; it is another thing to be educated to make reasonable judgments about it.

Of course, it might be argued in response, that educators have an obligation to guide the thinking of students and that modern secular scholarship provides the most reasonable way of proceeding. But we disagree about this. We disagree deeply about what is reasonable when it comes to sexuality and politics and economics and the origins of the world. If the dominant ways of thinking of our time are secular, there continue to be religious alternatives. (Indeed, what appears to be a secular consensus among scholars is artificial and misleading, for theologians aren't allowed to vote; they aren't allowed into the main quad of the academy, much less into public schools.) Our argument is that when we disagree, at least when the disagreements cut deep, educators are obligated to give students some sense of what is at issue. If students are to be educated, if they are to think critically, then religious voices must be included in our curricular conversations.

Locating Religion in the Curriculum

If we are to take religion seriously, should we include it in existing courses ("natural inclusion") or do we need new courses in religion? Religion in courses, or courses in religion? Our answer? Both.

If religion is to be taken seriously, if the importance and complexity of religion are to be acknowledged, then, we suggest, we need to carve space out of the curriculum for courses in religion - or "religious studies" (which has become the term of choice in higher education). And just as we require science teachers to be certified in science, so religious studies should become a certifiable field for teachers of religion. We believe that high school students should be required to take at least one year-long course in religious studies.

Required courses are not just around the corner, however, so we suggest what may be a more realistic two-prong approach. First, we must emphasize natural inclusion. Teachers and textbooks must make clear that there are religious alternatives to secular ways of thinking. A *minimal fairness* would require that a first chapter in textbooks, and an opening lecture or two in courses, include some discussion of religious ways of approaching the "subject" at hand. Ideally, those religious perspectives would again be included later, at critical points in the course.

But, second, if a *robust fairness* is to be possible, schools must begin to offer more elective courses in religious studies, especially as certified teachers become available and as students and their parents come to appreciate the importance of religion in the curriculum. A few communities here and there might even consider

requiring courses in religious studies.

How To Teach About Religion

From within the New Consensus a sharp distinction is drawn between (unconstitutional) indoctrination, proselytizing, and the practice of religion on the one hand and, on the other, (constitutional) teaching about religion, which is objective, non-sectarian, neutral, balanced and fair.

The New Consensus is grounded in the Supreme Court's 1963 *Abington Township v. Schempp* decision in which, as we have seen, the Court affirmed the constitutionality of teaching about religion in public schools when done "objectively as part of a secular program of education." Of course what it means to be "objective" is not uncontroversial; indeed it is not uncommon nowadays to hold that there is no such thing as objectivity. What is clear from *Schempp* is that the Court's touchstone idea (once again) was neutrality. Teachers and texts must be *neutral* in dealing with religion; they must be neutral among religions, and they must be neutral between religion and nonreligion.

Fairness and Neutrality. As we have described it, the idea of a liberal education requires fairness but not neutrality. Just as a judge might be fair to the opposing parties in a lawsuit before passing judgment, so teachers might be fair to contending points of view before passing a reasoned judgment. Indeed, we believe that other things being equal, educators have an obligation to guide the thinking of their students. But other things aren't equal when religion is at issue because of the First Amendment: teachers in *public schools* must be neutral as well as fair.

And we must keep in mind that neutrality not only governs the treatment of religion when it does come up (for whatever reason); it also governs when religion should be included in the curriculum. If students learn about ways of living and thinking about the world that conflict with religious alternatives, then *neutrality requires that those alternatives also be included in the discussion, fairly.*

We trust that educators will also keep in mind that it is not at all *obvious* where the truth lies, and quite apart from civic and constitutional constraints they should show some humility in dealing with complicated and controversial matters. When fundamentally different worldviews shape the disagreements, it is not easy to say what the truth is.

Diversity. To be educated about religion is to understand something of *religions*, of religion in its diversity, just as to be educated about politics is to understand more than one's own political party. It is not open to educators to include only one religious tradition in the discussion. If particular courses will inevitably take some religions more seriously than others because of their relevance to the subject, there must be some overall balance in the curriculum. We no longer believe that it is educationally sound to teach American or Western history only, and just as students must know something of world cultures, so they must know

something of world religions if they are to be educated. (And, as we've seen, the Establishment Clause requires neutrality among religions, as well as neutrality between religion and nonreligion.)

Religion from the Outside and the Inside. It is often enlightening to use the resources of modern secular scholarship to put religious texts and traditions into historical, cultural, and philosophical context. Comparative study of religions is especially interesting and important: How are religions alike and how are they different? It is tremendously important to keep in mind, however, that the world - and any particular religious tradition - will look one way when viewed from the "outside" using the categories and conceptual nets of secular scholarship, but will look quite different when viewed from the "inside" using the religious categories of that particular tradition.¹² Indeed, if we are to be fair we must let advocates of a point of view - a religious tradition - speak for themselves, using the conceptual resources of their own traditions. This is often best done through the use of primary sources.

Obviously a great deal more needs to be said - and we have said much of it elsewhere.⁽¹³⁾ It is now time to turn to moral education.

3. Moral Education

There is not a great deal of agreement about what moral education should be. We will argue that "moral education" is an umbrella-term for two quite different tasks. The first is to nurture in children those (consensus) virtues and values that make them good people. But, of course, good people can make bad judgments. The second task of moral education is provide students with the intellectual resources that enable them to make informed and responsible judgments about difficult (and controversial) matters of moral importance. Both are proper and important tasks of schools.

Education as a Moral Enterprise

We trust that it is uncontroversial to say that schooling is unavoidably a moral enterprise. Indeed, schools teach morality in a number of ways, both implicit and explicit.

1. Schools have a moral ethos embodied in rules, rewards and punishments, dress codes, honor codes, student government, relationships, styles of teaching, sports and extracurricular emphases, art and appearances, and in the kinds of respect accorded students and teachers. Schools convey to children what is expected of them, what is normal, what is right and wrong. It is often claimed that values are caught rather than taught; through their ethos, schools socialize children into patterns of moral behavior.

2. Textbooks and courses often address moral questions and take moral positions. Literature inevitably explores moral issues and writers take positions on those issues - as do publishers who decide which literature goes in the anthologies. In

teaching history we initiate students into particular cultural traditions and identities. While economics courses and texts typically avoid overt moral language and claim to be "value-free," their accounts of human nature, decision-making, and the economic world have moral implications (as we shall see).

3. The overall shape of the curriculum is morally-loaded by virtue of what it requires, what it makes available as electives, and what it ignores. For example, for more than a century (but especially since *A Nation at Risk* and the reform reports of the 1980s) there has been a powerful movement to make schooling and the curriculum serve economic purposes. Religion and art, by contrast, have been largely ignored (and are not even elective possibilities in many schools). As a result, schooling encourages a rather more materialistic and less spiritual culture - a matter of some moral significance.

4. Educators have devised a variety of approaches to values and morality embodied in self-esteem, community service, civic education, sex education, drug education, Holocaust education, multicultural education, values clarification, and character education programs - to name but a few. We might consider two of the most influential of these approaches briefly.

For the past several decades values clarification programs have been widely used in public schools. On this approach, teachers help students "clarify" their values by having them reflect on moral dilemmas and think through the consequences of the options open to them, choosing that action that maximizes their deepest values. It is unjustifiable for a teacher to "impose" his or her values on students; this would be an act of oppression that denies the individuality and autonomy of students. Values are ultimately personal; indeed, the implicit message is that there are no right or wrong values. Needless to say, this is a deeply controversial approach.

The Character Education movement has taken a markedly different tact. According to the "Character Education Manifesto" (1996)(14) "all schools have the obligation to foster in their students personal and civic virtues such as integrity, courage, responsibility, diligence, service, and respect for the dignity of all persons." The goal is the development of character or virtue, not correct views on "ideologically charged issues." Schools must become "communities of virtue" in which "responsibility, hard work, honesty, and kindness are modeled, taught, expected, celebrated, and continually practiced." An important resource is the "reservoir of moral wisdom" that can be found in "great stories, works of art, literature, history, and biography." Education is a moral enterprise in which "we need to reengage the hearts, minds, and hands of our children in forming their own characters, helping them 'to know the good, love the good, and do the good.'" We are inclined to think that character education is a vast improvement on values clarification - and will say a good deal more about it below.

5. Finally, we note what is conspicuous by its absence: while all universities offer courses in ethics, very few public schools have such courses. Unlike either values clarification or character education programs, the major purpose of ethics courses

is usually to provide students with intellectual resources drawn from a variety of traditions that might orient them in the world and help them think through difficult moral problems. As important as we all agree morality to be, it is striking that ethics courses are not an option thought worth offering in public schools.

Socialization and Education

We have drawn a distinction between socialization, training, and indoctrination on the one hand, and education on the other. Socialization, we suggested, is the uncritical initiation of students into a tradition, a way of thinking and acting. Education, by contrast, requires critical distance on tradition, exposure to alternatives, informed and reflective deliberation about how to think and live.

Not all, but much character education might better be called character training or socialization, for the point is not so much to teach virtue and values by way of critical reflection on contending points of view, but to structure the moral ethos of schooling to nurture the development of those moral habits and virtues which we agree to be good and important, that are part of our moral consensus. This is not a criticism of character education. Children must be morally trained.

But there are limitations to character education as a general theory of moral education; it was not designed to address critical thinking about those "ideologically charged" debates that divide us. Character education does appeal, as the Manifesto makes clear, to a heritage of stories, literature, art, and biography to inform and deepen students' understanding of, and appreciation for, moral virtue. Often such literature will reveal the moral ambiguities of life and discussion of it will encourage critical reflection on what is right and wrong. But if the literature is chosen to nurture the development of the right virtues and values, it may not encourage informed and critical thinking about contending values and ways of thinking and living. We would note, however, that character education often nurtures the virtues of tolerance, respect, and civility that play major roles in enabling educational discussion of controversial issues.

One of the supposed virtues of the values clarification movement, by contrast, was its use of moral dilemmas and divisive issues, and in asking students to consider the consequences of their actions it required them to think critically about them. But the values clarification movement never required students to develop an *informed* or *educated* understanding of moral frameworks of thought that could provide them with critical distance on their personal desires and moral intuitions; it left them to their own inner resources (which might be meager).

Let us put it this way. Character education is an essential aspect of moral education, but a fully adequate theory of moral education must also address those morally divisive ("ideologically-charged") issues that are sufficiently important so that students must be educated about them. Of course, one of these issues is the nature of morality itself; after all, we disagree about how to justify and ground those values and virtues that the character education movement nurtures.

If students are to be morally educated - and educated about morality - they must have some understanding of the moral frameworks civilization provides for making sense of the moral dimension of life. After all, morality is not intellectually free-floating, a matter of arbitrary choices and merely personal values. Morality is bound up with our place in a community or tradition, our understanding of nature and human nature, our convictions about death and immortality, our experiences of the sacred, our assumptions about what the mind can know, and our understanding of what makes life meaningful. We make sense of what we ought to do, of what kind of a person we should be, in light of all of these aspects of life - at least if we are reflective.

A Sketch of a Theory of Moral Education

1. For any society (or school) to exist its members (students, teachers, and administrators) must share a number of moral virtues: they must be honest, responsible, and respectful of each other's well-being. We agree about this. Public schools have a vital role to play in nurturing these consensus virtues and values as the character education movement rightly emphasizes; indeed, a major purpose of schooling is to help develop good persons.
2. If we are to live together peacefully in a pluralistic society, we must also nurture those civic virtues and values that are part of our constitutional tradition: we must acknowledge responsibility for protecting each others rights; we must debate our differences civilly; we must keep informed. A major purpose of schooling is to nurture good citizenship.
3. But when we disagree about important moral and civic issues, including the nature of morality itself, then, for both the civic and educational reasons we discussed above, students must learn about the alternatives, and teachers and schools should not take official positions on where the truth lies. The purpose of a *liberal education* should be to nurture an informed and reflective understanding of the conflicts.
4. What shape moral education should take depends on the maturity of students. We might think of a K through 12 continuum in which character education begins immediately with the socialization of children into those consensus values and virtues that sustain our communities. As children grow older and more mature they should gradually be initiated into a liberal education in which they are taught to think in informed and reflective ways about important, but controversial, moral issues.
5. Character education and liberal education cannot be isolated in single courses but describe dimensions of the curriculum as a whole. We also believe, however, that there should be room in the curriculum for a *capstone course* that high school seniors might take, in which they learn about the most important frameworks of moral thought, secular and religious, historical and contemporary, and how such frameworks might shape our thinking about the most urgent moral problems we face.

Whose Values?

This is, of course, the inevitable question: if we are going to teach values, whose values are we going to teach? The answer is simple, at least in principle: we teach everyone's values. When we agree with each other we teach the importance and rightness of those consensus values. When we disagree, we teach about the alternatives and withhold judgment.

For example, we agree about democracy; it is proper, indeed important, to convey the value of democracy and the democratic virtues to students. We disagree deeply about the values of the Republican and Democratic parties, however. We can't leave politics out of the curriculum simply because it is controversial. If students are to be educated, if they are to make informed political decisions, they must learn something about the values and policies of the two parties. In public schools teachers and texts should not take sides when the public is deeply divided; there should be no established political party. Students should be taught about the alternatives, fairly. And so it should be with every other major moral or civic issue that divides us - including religion.

Liberal Education as Moral Education

A good liberal education will also be a moral education in three important ways. First, it will provide students with a basic cultural literacy regarding the human condition. In studying history students should come to appreciate history as a record of social, political, moral, and religious experiments that give us insight into the causes of human suffering and flourishing. The study of literature gives students imaginative insights into the hearts and minds, the joys and suffering, of people in different times and places. History and literature provide students with a multitude of vicarious experiences so that they are not at the mercy of their limited and inevitably inadequate personal insights and experiences. And so in various ways do most subjects in the curriculum add to our background understanding of the human condition.

Second, a good liberal education will initiate students into cultural traditions, shaping their moral identities in the process. As we have already noted, we are not social atoms, but inheritors of languages, cultures, institutions, and moral traditions. For example, from the beginning it has been a purpose of public education to make students into good citizens, good Americans. In teaching history and civics and literature we provide students with a past, a sense of identity, a role in developing stories, a set of obligations.

But, third, a good liberal education will have liberating as well as conserving effects, for it will teach students that disagreements among us run deep: we often disagree about the meaning and lessons of history--as the debate over multiculturalism makes clear. We often disagree about the justice and goodness of different cultures and subcultures. We disagree about how to make sense of the world, about how to interpret it. Indeed, we often disagree about what the relevant

facts are--or, even more basically, what counts as a fact, as evidence, as a good argument. We have quite different worldviews. A good liberal education will expose students to the major ways civilization has devised for talking about the human condition - and morality.

4. Religion and Moral Education

Most moral education programs in public schools ignore religion; the implicit message is that religion is irrelevant to the development of virtue, moral judgment, and the search for moral truth. But if schools are to be built on common ground, if religious sub-cultures are to be treated with respect, if schools are to be neutral in matters of religion, and if students are to be liberally educated, then religious voices must be included in the discussion.

Religion and Character Education

The character education movement is grounded in the conviction that there are consensus virtues and values. The consensus must be local, but it may also be broader; indeed, its advocates sometimes claim (rightly) that virtues such as honesty and integrity are universal and are found in all the world's religions. Nonetheless, because religion can't be practiced in public schools and because it is often controversial, the character education movement avoids it. Religion is mentioned only once in the Character Education Manifesto - in the claim that character education is a joint responsibility of schools, families, communities, and churches (as well, presumably, as non-Christian religious institutions).

Clearly the moral ethos of public schools must be secular rather than religious. Character education cannot use religious exercises to nurture the development of character, nor may teachers invoke religious authority to teach good behavior. At the same time, however, character education cannot implicitly convey the idea that religion is irrelevant to morality. As is the case elsewhere in the curriculum, ignoring religion marginalizes it. When character educators ignore religion students learn that religious tradition and authority are morally unimportant and are unnecessary for moral guidance. This is, of course, an extremely controversial claim.

Why should we be honest? Is it *just* a matter of social consensus, of the fact that we (however "we" might be defined) happen to value honesty? Or are there deep reasons for valuing honesty? Historically, religions have provided the categories, the narratives, the worldviews, that provided the deep justifications for morality. No doubt religions disagree about a great deal (as we will suggest below) but they do agree about many of the virtues and values at the heart of the character education movement. Of course, many *secular* ways of understanding morality can also be used to underwrite those same virtues and values. Sometimes, character educators appeal to our civic traditions. To borrow a term that John Rawls has used in a somewhat different context, there is an *overlapping consensus* regarding many moral virtues and values.⁽¹⁵⁾ Though our respective religious and philosophical commitments may differ in important ways, they

nonetheless allow each of us, from within our own traditions, to affirm for deep reasons some of the same virtues and values. Our moral situation, then, isn't one of *mere* consensus; it is that we have a variety of ways of justifying our moral commitments that allow for overlapping virtues and values.

If character education is not to be shallow, it must give students some sense of the deep justifications for our consensus virtues and values. And if this is to be done fairly, if it is not to discriminate against religion, then students must learn something about religious ways of grounding our (consensus) virtues and values. Character education programs must acknowledge that many people look to religious authority and revelation for moral guidance. Character education employs literature and history to convey moral messages; minimal fairness requires that some of those stories and some of that history should make clear that people's moral convictions are often grounded in religious traditions.

One of the most natural and appropriate ways to include religious perspectives, particularly in elementary grades, is through literature. Carefully chosen stories from and about the various religions help students acquire some sense of what those traditions are all about - from the inside - and how they ground morality. Indeed, there are a growing number of books for young people about the world's faiths suitable for use in public schools.

Moral Education and the Bible. Conservative religious parents sometimes ask that Bible courses be offered in public schools as way of underwriting moral virtues and values, and giving moral direction to children. While Bible courses can be constitutional (if the Bible is taught "objectively" or neutrally), the courts have made it clear that public schools cannot teach students that the Bible is true, or that children should act in accord with Biblical morality.

Nonetheless, by studying the Bible (or any religious text) students will encounter a vocabulary and framework for thinking about morality and the human condition that will provide them with alternatives to (and critical distance on) the secular ideas and ideals they acquire from popular culture and from elsewhere in the curriculum. Morality lies at the heart of the Bible (and of all religion) and, as we've argued, one important reason for studying religion is to acquire some sense of the answers that have been given to the fundamental existential questions of life. Teachers and texts can't endorse Biblical answers to those questions, but they can expose students to them fairly as part of a good liberal education. Students may find those answers compelling even if their teachers and texts don't require them to.

Religion and Liberal Education

Character education programs are rooted in the happy fact that there continues to be a moral consensus about some virtues and values of importance. But there is much about which we *disagree* morally - and much of this is sufficiently important to warrant a place in the curriculum.

Some virtues, of course, are controversial - at least around the edges. Patriotism, for example, or modesty, or chastity. Pacifism is deeply controversial. We even disagree about honesty in some situations - in advertising, in matters of national security, and in social etiquette, for example. We disagree deeply about any number of moral issues - abortion, sexuality, social justice and animal rights. At a more fundamental level we disagree about what it means to be a moral person, to have a moral vocation: is morality primarily a matter of respecting people's rights, or does it require that we work actively to alleviate suffering or liberate the oppressed, even at the cost of some self-sacrifice? Should the state or the economy serve moral purposes, or should they be conceived as morally neutral institutions within which individuals may pursue their own conceptions of the good freely?

Of course the primary reason we disagree about some virtues and many moral issues is that we are committed to strikingly different worldviews. Some of us ground our moral judgments in scripture, others in cost-benefit analyses, yet others in conscience (among many possibilities). Even when we agree, about honesty, for example, we may disagree about why honesty is morally required. Long-term self-interest and love of humanity may both prescribe honesty as the best policy, though one's motivation and the kind of person one is may be quite different in the two cases. And, of course, there will be occasions when the requirements of love and (even long-term) self-interest will diverge. Just as in math its not enough to agree about the right answer (but students must get it in the right way), so in any domain of the curriculum a good education requires more than agreement about conclusions. We have argued that if character education is not to be shallow, students must acquire some sense of the deep justifications for morality; the focus there, however, was on providing a measure of support for consensus virtues and values. Now the focus is on understanding and thinking critically about our differences.

As we noted above, historically, religions have provided the deep justifications for morality. From within almost any religious worldview, conservative or liberal, people must set themselves right with God, reconciling themselves to the basic structure of reality. They are to act in love and justice and community, being mindful of those less fortunate than themselves. The conventional wisdom now, however, is that morality can be taught without reference to religion. Indeed, the deep justifications have changed. Health and home economics texts often ground their account of values in humanistic psychology, while economics texts appeal to neo-classical economic theory and modern social science. Modern science (at least implicitly) teaches students there is no moral structure to nature. Our moral vocabulary has changed in significant ways: like modern culture generally, modern education often emphasizes rights over duties, individualism over community, autonomy over authority, happiness over salvation, self-esteem over self-sacrifice, cost-benefit analysis over conscience. Indeed, students may be taught that there are no right or wrong answers when moral judgments are the issue. The problem, then, is not just that religious accounts of morality are ignored, it is that they are rendered suspect by the secular worldview which

pervades modern education.

To draw out the implications of our account we will consider the role of religion in two areas of the curriculum that deal with morally controversial matter - sex education and economics.

Sex Education. It is important for students (at some age) to learn about the biology of sexuality but, of course, the purpose of sex education has always been something more than simple science education. Its primary purpose has been to guide students' behavior, addressing major social problems such as unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

One way to address these problems is to teach students sexual abstinence. Another is to provide them with technological know-how regarding birth control and condoms. Not surprisingly, many parents (including many religious conservatives) view the condom approach as a legitimization of sexual promiscuity and favor "abstinence only." Many educators respond that it is naive to teach only abstinence because many adolescents will inevitably engage in sexual behavior and they must learn how to protect themselves and others. The pragmatic middle ground has become "abstinence but": teach students abstinence but include something about condoms as well.

Whichever position we take requires that we give students *reasons* for using condoms or foregoing the pleasures of sexuality. Three kinds of answers are common. First, it can be argued that either approach is in their long-term self-interest, and much sex education focuses on the unhappy consequences of unplanned pregnancies and STDs. Some students will recognize the risks and alter their behavior accordingly - though adolescents are not typically strong on long-term self-interest and deferred gratification.

Perhaps more important, if it is to be truly *educational* sex education must make students aware of the fact that sexual behavior is universally held to be subject to moral as well as prudential judgments. To be ignorant of this is to be uneducated.

So, how do we introduce morality into sex education? A second approach - that taken in each of four high school health texts we recently reviewed - is a variation on values clarification. Students should act responsibly in this sense: they should survey their options, consider the consequences (on themselves and on others), and then act in a way that maximizes whatever it is that they value most. Each of our health texts concludes that responsible individuals will practice abstinence. The problem, of course, is that this conclusion requires a considerable act of faith, for what students value most is up to them. The books offer no grounds for assessing the values of students as morally right or wrong; values are ultimately personal.

Health, home economics, and sex education texts and materials often use the language of values rather than that of morality. One reason is that for many educators "morality" has come to be synonymous with what is "moralistic" and

hence narrow and intolerant. But, of course, this is an extraordinarily narrow view of morality. Indeed, neither philosophers nor theologians (in whose domains ethics is usually taken to reside) use "morality" in such a narrow way. We suspect that the deeper problem is that much social science can't make sense of morality and so must translate it into talk of choices and personal values. Virtually all the health and home economics texts we have reviewed start from humanistic psychology. But if the authors can't cast their conceptual nets wider than this it is not surprising that they don't catch morality in them.

One irony in all of this is that virtually everyone still believes that some actions are morally right and other actions are morally wrong. Pedophilia is morally wrong. Not telling the person with whom one proposes to have sex that he or she has an STD is morally wrong. Honesty isn't just a matter of personal values; it is morally binding. If someone doesn't understand this they are ignorant, and if we don't teach students this we are irresponsible.

As we have argued, the character education movement has been a widely accepted (and much needed) antidote to the relativistic tendencies of values clarification, and it offers a third approach to sex education. Sexual relationships, like all relationships, should be characterized by honesty, loyalty, and respect for the feelings, privacy, and well-being of others - and there is broad consensus about this. Prudence, self-control, and a willingness to defer gratification are virtues of unquestionable importance in all aspects of life, but particularly in matters of sexuality. (While the values clarification approach typically highlights dilemmas and choices, character education emphasizes habit; self-control can't just be the result of decisions made as we go.) We agree that it is wrong for children to have sexual relationships. We might even agree that sexual modesty in dress and demeanor is an important virtue, at least for children. The moral consensus on sexuality is, no doubt, limited and fragile. Still, because there is a consensus schools should constantly emphasize these moral virtues and principles by means of their ethos, dress codes, the stories told and read, and, of course, in health, home economics, and sex education courses. Sex education must also be moral education.

Is this sufficient? What about religion?

We have argued that character education cannot (implicitly) give the impression that religion is irrelevant to morality. Even young children should learn that important moral virtues and values can be found in the world's religions. Children's stories about love and romance and marriage and the family should include religious literature.

Character education builds on moral consensus, but obviously there is also a good deal relating to sexuality about which we disagree, often strongly - abstinence and birth control, abortion and homosexuality, for example. Not surprisingly, we also disagree about what to teach students about these things; indeed, we often disagree about *whether* to teach about such things at all. Our claim is this: if controversial issues are to be included in the sex education curriculum, then, as

always, students must hear the different voices--secular and religious, conservative and liberal--that are part of our cultural conversation. Given the importance of religion in our culture, to remain ignorant of religious ways of thinking about sexuality is to remain uneducated. Indeed, the term "sex education" is something of a misnomer, for as it is usually taught, sex education is far from being truly educational, for it limits the range of voices allowed into the discussion.

Older students should learn about religious as well as secular arguments for abstinence, and they should learn how birth control is understood in different religious traditions. (Although all of the health books we reviewed discussed condoms, none mentioned that artificial birth control is forbidden in Roman Catholic teaching.) Indeed, they should learn something about the relevant scriptural sources (in different traditions) for sexual morality, marriage and the family. They should know, for example, that within religions, marriage is a "holy" or sacramental (and not just a legal) institution. They should understand the policy positions on controversial sexual issues taken by contemporary religious organizations and theologians. Students are illiberally "educated" if they learn to think about sexuality only in the secular categories.

Or consider abortion. For many religious people, abortion is the most important moral issue of our time; for them, it is the most important consequence of many unwanted pregnancies and much sexual promiscuity. Yet most sex education ignores abortion. Of the health texts we reviewed only one mentioned it--devoting a single paragraph to explaining that it provides a medically safe alternative to adoption. That paragraph concludes: "this procedure has sparked a great deal of controversy."¹⁶ Well, yes. But we suggest that to be an educated human being in America at the end of the 20th century one must understand the abortion controversy; indeed, its relevance to sex education is immediate and tremendously important.

So what does it mean to be educated about abortion? Certainly students should understand the point of view of the Roman Catholic Church and those religious conservatives who believe that abortion is murder. They should also understand the point of view of those religious liberals (from various traditions) who are pro-choice. They should understand feminist positions on abortion. They should learn about the key Supreme Court rulings and different ways of interpreting the implications of political liberty for the abortion debate. Students should read primary source documents written from within each of these traditions. And, of course, teachers and texts should not take positions on where truth lies when we are so deeply divided.

Or consider homosexuality. Our health texts each mentioned that some people are heterosexual and others are homosexual (though not everyone would agree with this way of putting it) and that we don't quite know what accounts for the difference. That's it. Like abortion, however, the issue of homosexuality (and gay rights) is one that is tremendously important for students to understand if they are to be informed citizens and educated about sexuality.

One approach is for educators to decide what is right (when we disagree) and then teach their views to our children. New York City's *Children of the Rainbow* multicultural curriculum is a rather notorious example; it would have taught elementary school children the acceptability of homosexuality and nontraditional families had not a coalition of religious conservatives rebelled, ultimately forcing the departure of the system's Chancellor. Our objection to this curriculum is not its position on homosexuality; it is that it takes a position at all. It is proper and important to teach children to respect the rights of others; name-calling and gay-bashing are not permissible--and there is broad consensus about this. But we disagree deeply about homosexuality on moral and religious grounds. Given our civic framework it is not permissible for a public school to institutionalize a moral or religious position on a divisive issue and teach it to children uncritically. Given our educational framework, students must learn about the alternative positions when we disagree; all the (major) voices must be included in the discussion. (The New York City case was particularly troubling because the children were so young.)

What then would an adequate sex education curriculum look like? It must, of course, be age appropriate. Lessons and courses for young children should adopt the character education model, and great care should be taken to ensure that we don't prematurely encourage sexual behavior; character education continues to be appropriate for high school students - so long as it deals with matters about which we agree. Indeed, we are inclined to think that adolescents need moral guidance in matters of sexual morality rather more than they need freedom. They must learn to think about sexuality in moral terms.

We have also argued, however, that mature students need to be educated about some matters of great importance about which we disagree deeply. When we do this, however, we must educate them liberally, including all of the (major) voices--religious as well as secular--in the discussion.

We have already noted that one disagreement is over whether to teach abstinence only. Unhappily, our differences here appear to be irreconcilable. We do believe that some of the controversy would dissipate if sex education were truly liberal: if it would take seriously moral and religious ways of thinking about sexuality, then discussion of condoms would be less clearly understood as legitimizing promiscuity. Still, if such courses are required, there should be opt-out (or opt-in) provisions. We suspect that if parents were convinced that their moral and religious views were taken seriously, fewer would have their children opt-out.

We recognize that adequate materials are lacking, and most teachers are not prepared to include religious perspectives on sexuality in their classes. It is no easy task to make sense of the soul when discussing abortion in a health class, sacramental understandings of marriage in a home economics class, or the sinfulness of promiscuity in a sex education class. Sex education teachers are usually from health education, psychology, and the social sciences, rather than the humanities or religious studies, and they are likely to have no background in

religious studies to help them make sense of religious perspectives on sex education. This is, once again, reason for a required course in religious studies (or a moral capstone course) that provides a sufficiently deep understanding of religion to enable students to make sense of religious interpretations of morality and sexuality. Still, for both civic and educational reasons, some attention to religion in sex education courses is absolutely essential.

Finally, we note that other teachers will sometimes find themselves drawn into sex education. Much fiction, for example, deals with sexuality - dating, love, marriage, integrity, adultery, homosexuality, and the family. The study of literature is important for the insight and perspective it provides on the inescapable existential questions of life--a good number of which bear on sexuality. Moreover, it is tremendously important that teachers in a variety of courses provide students the moral resources for thinking critically about the portrayal of sexuality in popular culture.

Economics. Sex education inevitably deals with moral issues of considerable controversy; economic education, by contrast, stirs little if any controversy. And yet, economics is, in our culture, deeply controversial, often on moral and religious grounds. We need to realize that students are taught in economics courses about values, human nature, decision-making, and the proper organization of our economic institutions (which is often considered to be a matter of *justice*).

Of course, the scriptures of all religious traditions address justice and the moral dimensions of our social and economic life. What may be less appreciated is the *vast* religious literature on justice and economics of the last hundred years. In Christianity, for example, economic issues have continuously been at the heart of moral theology - from Pope Leo XIII's great 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, through the Social Gospel movement, Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realism, and liberation theology, to Pope John Paul's recent encyclical *Centesimus Annus*. Indeed, most mainline denominations and many ecumenical agencies have official statements on economics and justice.

What is central to this vast literature is the claim that to understand the world of economics we must use moral and religious categories. Economic decisions must take into consideration the dignity of people and respect for what is sacred. People are by nature social beings, born into webs of obligation to other people and to God. If we are by nature sinful, it is incumbent on us to rise about self-interest. Religious traditions have emphasized cooperation over competition, and are deeply wary of the corrupting influence of wealth, materialism, and our consumer culture. All religious traditions pay special attention to the needs of the poor--the widow, the orphan, the alien.

Not surprisingly, economics textbooks say nothing about religious ways of understanding economics; instead they teach neo-classical economic theory. In fact, according to the new *National Content Standards in Economics* students should learn only the "majority paradigm" or "neo-classical model" of economic behavior, for to include "strongly held minority views of economic processes

[only] risks confusing and frustrating teachers and students who are then left with the responsibility of sorting the qualifications and alternatives without a sufficient foundation to do so."(17)

And what is neo-classical economic theory? Put a little too crudely, the idea is that economics is a "value-free" science. The economic world is defined in terms of the competition of self-interested individuals with unlimited wants for scarce resources. Values are subjective, personal preferences. Decisions should be made according to cost-benefit analyses that maximize whatever it is that people value (be it Bibles or pornography) and that leave no room in the equation for duties, the Sacred, or those dimensions of life that aren't quantifiable. Economics is one thing, religion is another.

It is, we suggest, virtually impossible to reconcile this understanding of human nature, values, and economics, with any religious tradition. The problem here isn't that economists and theologians will inevitably recommend different policies - though they very well may. It is that their basic categories for understanding the world are so radically different.

Compare, for example, the Catholic Bishops who, in their powerful 1986 statement on the economy, warned against a "tragic separation" between faith and our economic life. People cannot "'immerse [them]selves in earthly activities as if [they] were utterly foreign to religion, and religion were nothing more than the fulfillment of acts of worship and the observance of a few moral obligations.'" Economists, like all of us, must realize that "economic life raises important social and moral questions.... [It] is one of the chief areas where we live out our faith, love our neighbor, confront temptation, fulfill God's creative design, and achieve our holiness."(18)

And what happens when we divorce economics and religion? It is not irrelevant that a number of studies by economists have shown that students who study neo-classical economic theory end up more self-interested than when they began.(19) More important, the intellectual divorce of economics from religion nurtures and reinforces the growing secularization of our economic life. The sociologist Robert Wuthnow has written:

Asked if their religious beliefs had influenced their choice of a career, most of the people I have interviewed in recent years - Christians and non-Christians alike - said no. Asked if they thought of their work as a calling, most said no. Asked if they understood the concept of stewardship, most said no. Asked how religion did influence their work lives or thoughts about money, most said the two were completely separate(20)

We teach economics not as a *subject* open to religious as well as secular interpretations, but as a *discipline*, as a "hard" social science and, in the process, convey to students *uncritically* a way of thinking about values, justice, and social institutions that is deeply controversial. We are not so quixotic as to recommend

that economics courses balance social science with theology at every turn; but we do think that economics texts should be at least *minimally fair* by acknowledging, and saying something about, religious alternatives to neo-classical economic theory. It is striking to us that most economics texts (quite properly) include discussions of Marxism and socialism, but none that we have seen says anything significant about religious ways of thinking about economics.

Courses in Morality and Religion. A modest commitment to *natural inclusion* and *minimal fairness* can do a great deal to alert students to the fact that there are religious ways of thinking about sexuality and economics that have moral implications. But it is unlikely that any such limited exposure will enable students to come to any deep understanding of religion or of religious ways of being moral. Moralities are grounded in worldviews that make sense of them, that render them rational, that give them cultural and intellectual force. Religion is too complex, teachers aren't prepared, the number of textbook pages is limited, and the authorities who define the disciplines will be resistant. Courses in economics and sex education will never be *robustly fair*. But there is some possibility that the curriculum as whole might be, if it includes courses that do enable students to study religion in some depth.

We have argued that all high school students should be required to take a year-long introductory course in religious studies that would enable them to explore several religious traditions. As we envision it, such courses would deal not only with scriptural texts and the historical forms of religions, but with *contemporary religious* ways of making sense of those religiously contested domains of the curriculum that students now (uncritically) learn to interpret in exclusively secular ways: nature and the origins of the world; the meaning of history; economics and justice; sexuality and the family; *and morality*.

We also believe that there should be another kind of course required of seniors. Rather like the moral "capstone" courses that college seniors were often required to take in the nineteenth century, high school seniors might well take an interdisciplinary capstone course that would explore the great existential, often moral, questions of life, and provide them with conceptual resources that allow them to think in a deeper, more informed way about their lives, their moral values, and their society. As we envision such courses, they would address the interrelationship of theory and practice, using secular and religious texts to explore a variety of moral issues.

5. Other Issues

Teacher Competence. Some members of minority traditions who accept our educational framework in principle believe that in practice it is dangerous to include religion in the curriculum because teachers, no matter how well intentioned, will inevitably display their ignorance and prejudices. This is a justifiable concern. The great majority of teachers are not prepared to teach about religion. Many know little about religious traditions other than their own (if, indeed, they have one). We have articulated what we take to be the ideal toward

which we should be working. That it is an ideal makes it no less important; if we want to improve, we aim at the ideal. In any case, what is the alternative? Teachers and texts can't avoid religious issues. After all, in teaching the secular disciplines teachers give (sometimes controversial) secular answers to religiously-contested questions. And, of course, religion does surface here and there in textbooks now. It is unavoidable, and if we can't avoid it, we should teach it well. Moreover, some teachers express their prejudices in class now; some textbooks have distorted and inadequate accounts of minority religions now. The solution cannot be to leave "well enough" alone, but to make teachers, textbook authors, and curriculum planners self-conscious and better informed about what they are doing.

Pluralism and Relativism. Many times, in dealing with controversial topics, we've heard teachers say: "there is no right answer." Sometimes, in their concern to be tolerant, teachers will say that all religions are fundamentally the same beneath their outward differences. Much of the multicultural movement emphasizes the (equal) respect due all traditions. And, as we have argued, for educational and constitutional reasons public schools, texts, and teachers must remain neutral on matters of religion, treating secular and all religious positions fairly. Not surprisingly, many religious folks interpret all of this as relativism. One of the most difficult tasks teachers have is to convey to students the difference between pluralism (and a tolerance or respect for people holding different views) on the one hand, and relativism on the other.

It is important to remember - and to remind students - that the disagreements among different religious and secular traditions are almost always disagreements about what the truth is, what justice truly requires. No doubt within some intellectual traditions the idea of moral truth makes no sense, and older students should be introduced to such traditions as well - though even here there is often a *pragmatic* moral consensus about basic virtues and values. If students come to believe that choosing a religious (or a political or scientific position) is like choosing what to eat from a buffet line they will have misunderstood the nature of religion (and science) badly. From within each tradition, some foods are poisonous; others are healthy, and they are certainly not to be chosen on the basis of appearances or taste.

Because of the civic groundrules of our democracy, and because public schools should be committed to a liberal education that takes seriously the various participants in our cultural conversation, we properly teach students respect for the advocates of different religious and secular traditions. Indeed, teaching students to talk civilly about our differences is a tremendously important task of schools. But teachers must not take this to mean - and must not convey to students - and all moral or religious traditions are equally true or equally false. That is another thing entirely.

Absolutism. It is sometimes claimed that because religious accounts of morality are absolutist, religion, by its nature, cannot tolerate dissent. This has, of course, been a common religious position; it has also been a common secular position in

our century (on both the political Right and the Left). Some religious traditions have placed considerable emphasis on free conscience, however, and if some religions have claimed to know God's law with considerable certainty, others have emphasized humility. Just as scientists can believe in objective truth and yet favor an open society in which we debate what that truth is, so religious folk can believe in moral truth and yet favor an open society in which we pursue it openly, with humility.

Religious Diversity. If there are shared moral values that cut across religions, we also need to remember that there are differences among religions, and it won't do to say that they all agree about morality. As we've just suggested, some traditions favor religious establishments and are intolerant of dissent; others value freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state; some religions have required non-violence, others have called for holy wars; some have emphasized love and mercy, others justice and retribution; some have required chastity and poverty; others have sanctified marriage and wealth. Some religions have understood morality in terms of God's Law, others in terms of Love, or Grace, or Tradition, or Liberating the Oppressed. Religious conservatives have often grounded morality in scripture, while religious liberals have often held that through continuing moral and religious experience, reason and reflection, we can progressively acquire deeper insight into morality and reform our traditions. Some conservatives believe that people are so sinful that only the threat of Hell or the experience of divine grace can move them. Liberals often have a somewhat more optimistic view of human nature in which we have at least a significant potential for doing good apart from supernatural intervention. Teachers must be aware of the complexity of their subject.

Personal and Social Morality. We often think of morality in terms of personal virtues such as honesty, responsibility, and integrity - in part, perhaps, because such virtues are relatively uncontroversial, in part because they are congenial to an individualistic society. But there are dangers in uncritically conceiving of morality as a matter primarily of *personal virtue*. Historically, morality has been intimately tied to visions of justice, social institutions, and ways of thinking about human suffering and flourishing. Indeed, given the ubiquity of suffering and injustice it is hard to think of a more important task for schools than moral education *broadly conceived*. Of course, much that students study in history and literature classes *does* address the nature of suffering, injustice, and the human condition (and so it should be in economics classes).

6. Recommendations

If public schools are to neutral in matters of religion, if religion is to be treated with fairness and respect, and if students are to be liberally educated, then public education must take religion seriously. To that end, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Taking religion seriously in the curriculum, including in moral education, requires taking religious liberty seriously throughout the school culture. Every

school district must have a comprehensive policy that articulates the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none, and makes clear that the academic study of religion is an important part of the curriculum. The policy should be developed with broad community participation within the civic framework provided by the First Amendment. Only then will administrators and teachers have the legal and educational "safe harbor" needed to address religious issues in the classroom.

2. Character education is essential to the civic and educational mission of public education. Communities should work together to develop comprehensive character education programs that reflect the core moral values and civic virtues widely shared in the community. Such programs must take religion seriously by making sure that students are exposed to religious perspectives, where appropriate, in the curriculum. Character education cannot ignore religion; it cannot convey to students the idea that religion is irrelevant to moral virtue and judgment.

3. When we disagree about moral issues of importance (including the nature of morality itself) students must be educated about our differences. Liberal education is a form of moral education in which we teach students about the major ways, secular *and religious*, that humankind has developed for making sense of our lives and the world. Most courses deal with matters related to morality; those courses should be at least minimally fair to religious points of view.

4. But if religion and religious accounts of morality are to be taken seriously, we must not settle for natural inclusion and minimal fairness; schools must offer courses in religious studies that give the curriculum a robust fairness by enabling students to study religion in some depth. We also recommend interdisciplinary moral capstone courses for high school seniors that use secular and religious texts for framing the exploration of those inescapable moral and existential issues that are central to students' lives.

5. If any of this is to be done well then major reforms in teacher education are necessary. All teachers must be taught the civic and educational frameworks for dealing with religion in their Foundations and Teaching Methods courses. Unhappily, most teacher-educators have little understanding of them; religion simply isn't taken seriously in most schools of education.

6. All teachers who deal with morally- and religiously-contested matters should know something about the relationship of religion to their particular subjects and disciplines. Ideally, they should be required, as part of their certification, to take at least one course in relating religion to their subject ("Religion and American History," "Religion and Economics," "Religion and Sexuality," etc). Whether required or not, departments of religious studies should make such courses available as electives.

7. Universities and school systems should address these topics in a variety of

summer seminars and in-service workshops.

8. If there are to be *courses in religious studies* there must be teachers competent to teach them. Religious studies must become a certifiable field, requiring at least an undergraduate minor. Such courses must not be phased in until there are competent teachers.

9. If teachers are to do the job well they must have adequate textbooks and resource materials. A good deal of material already exists in some areas of the curriculum (in history and literature, for example) while there is very little material elsewhere (in economics and sex education, for example). For publishers to address this need they must be convinced that is a market for such material; states need to create such markets.

Conclusions

One purpose of moral education in public schools is to nurture virtue - when there is broad consensus about what virtue is. A second purpose is to initiate students into an ongoing cultural conversation about controversial moral issues and the nature of morality itself. The former purpose is accomplished through character education programs; the latter purpose is inherent in liberal education, properly conceived and practiced.

Both purposes are embedded in the larger educational project: making sense of life. On most accounts, morality isn't intellectually free-floating, a matter of personal choices and subjective values. Moralities are embedded in traditions, in conceptions of what it means to be human, in worldviews - and it makes a good deal of difference if we learn to think about our lives and the world in the categories of neo-classical economic theory, neo-Darwinian biology, humanistic psychology, or moral theology.

We have suggested here, and argued at great length elsewhere, that public schooling doesn't take religion seriously.(21) Rather, students are taught *uncritically* to think of all of life in secular categories. This is a matter of no small importance for the civic, constitutional, and educational reasons we have cited; indeed, it is scandalous. More to our point in this paper, there are implications for the practice of moral education. By ignoring religion (except in the safe context of distant history), public education fails to give students the conceptual and imaginative resources to think in an informed and critical way about controversial moral issues or the deep reasons for acting morally. With regard to religion, public education is illiberal education.

In *Habits of the Heart*(22) Robert Bellah and his colleagues argued that most Americans speak two quite different moral languages: an older, now "secondary" language derived from our civic and religious traditions; and a newer, "first" language of "utilitarian" and "expressive" individualism that is reinforced over and over again by modern culture. Unfortunately, they argue, the language of modern individualism isn't nearly rich enough to allow us to make sense of those

moral virtues and vices that are part of our civic and religious traditions. If we haven't become completely preoccupied with liberty and rights, self-interest and self-esteem, autonomy and individualism, we are in danger of this; we are losing our ability to speak meaningfully about virtue and duty, love and self-sacrifice, community and justice. The tendency is to forget the older languages, particularly when the everyday language of culture and the marketplace, schooling and scholarship are secular.

The temper of the times dictates that education must be relentlessly fixated on economic and technological development - both of which are important, of course. But in the end, we suggest, the greatest sources of meaning in life come not from wealth and technology but from altogether different realms of experience. If students are to be able to think in informed and critical ways about the sources of meaning in their lives they should be educated somewhat less about its material dimensions and somewhat more about morality and religion - and those forms of community that bind us together with our fellow human beings, with the past, with our posterity, and, perhaps also with ultimate reality.

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1. This paper is drawn from material that appears in an expanded version in *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* by Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes, published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in August, 1998. Background documents and consensus guidelines for understanding the civic framework outlined in the paper may be found in *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education* (1994, 1996, 1998), edited by Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas. The educational framework is developed at considerably greater length in Warren A. Nord's *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (1995).
 2. Free copies of the full Statement of Principles may be obtained from the First Amendment Center, 1207 18th Ave. S., Nashville, TN 37212. Telephone: (615)321-9588.
 3. *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947).
 4. *Religion in the Public Schools: A Joint Statement of Current Law* is available by writing to Religion in the Public Schools, 15 East 84th St., Suite 501, New York, NY 10028. The directive sent out from the U.S. Department of Education may be obtained by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN. Free copies of *A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* are available from the First Amendment Center.
 5. Under current law, it is not entirely clear how far school officials are required to go in accommodating opt-out requests. Until it was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1997, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) required accommodation if parents could show that particular lessons or school policies substantially burdened their child's free exercise of religion and if the school could not demonstrate a compelling interest in requiring attendance or enforcing

the policy. Even without RFRA, school officials should still take requests for religious accommodation seriously for two reasons. First, upholding the religious liberty of parents and students is the right thing to do in the spirit of the First Amendment. Second, in most cases, parents may also appeal to another constitutional right such as the right of parents to control the upbringing of their children or, on behalf of their children, the right of free speech. Though some recent lower-court decisions seem to ignore or minimize parental rights, the Supreme Court has long recognized such rights. See *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390 (1923) and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925). Free exercise of religion joined with either free speech or parental rights are powerful combinations. The Supreme Court itself has indicated that the "compelling state interest" test may be used when free-exercise claims are linked to at least one other constitutional right. On legal as well as civic grounds, therefore, public school officials are still well-advised to make every effort to accommodate the needs and requirements of religious parents and students.

6. See *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*, 827 F.2d. 1058 (6th Cir. 1986).

7. See *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962) and *School District of Abington v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

8. See *Roberts v. Madigan*, 921 F.2d. 1047 (10th Cir. 1991).

9. Nord and Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum*, pp. 9-10 and chapters 1 and 2 *passim*.

10. Haynes, *Finding Common Ground*, Chapter 6, pages 2-3.

11. What is understood as the transcendent dimension of reality (God, Nirvana, Brahman, the Tao, the Transcendent) differs considerably from religion to religion.

12. See Ninian Smart, *Religion and the Western Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), Chapter 1.

13. See Nord, *Religion and American Education*, Chapters 6 and 7, and Nord and Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum*, Chapter 2.

14. The *Character Education Manifesto* is printed in *Character*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1996), a publication of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, and is available from the Center.

15. See Rawls, *Political Justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

16. Leroy H. Getchell, *et al*, *Perspectives on Health* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1994), p. 163.

17. National Council on Economic Education, *National Content Standards in Economic* (New York, 1997), p. viii.
18. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986), pp. vi-vii.
19. See Robert Frank, Thomas Gilovich, and Dennis Regan, 'Does Studying Economics Inhibit Cooperation?' in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 7 (Spring, 1993), pp. 159-71.
20. Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the 21st Century: Reflections on the Challenges Ahead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 200.
21. See Nord, *Religion and American Education*, Chapters 2, 4, and 5, and Nord and Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum*, passim.
22. Robert Bellah, *et al*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

The Communitarian Network
2130 H Street, NW, Suite 703
Washington, DC 20052
202.994.6118
comnet@gwu.edu